

Journal Title: *Wide Screen*

Vol. 3, No.1, June 2011

ISSN: 1757-3920

URL: <http://widescreenjournal.org>

Published by Subaltern Media, 153 Sandringham Drive, Leeds LS17 8DQ, UK

HOME SWEET HOME: THE CAUTIONARY PRISON/FAIRY TALE

PAUL TREMBLAY

Abstract: The *Toy Story* franchise is one of the most successful Hollywood financial endeavors. The article compares the three films to captivity-based films. The author then proposes a rereading of the films as implicitly promoting an acceptance of subjugation as a preferred mode of socialization and concludes that they are traditional cautionary tales (based on Zipes' exploration of the concepts) and captivity-based media objects (after Foucault's research on prisons). Audience identification to characters that consent to abuses will be discussed.

INTRODUCTION

"...the institution of children's literature... paradoxically undermines the quality products for children, that is, the 'great' fiction, poetry, and artwork that it purportedly wants to disseminate and use to socialize and develop future humanist thinkers. This is because the institution of children's literature must operate more and more within the confines of the culture industry in which the prevailing consumerism and commercialism continue to minimize and marginalize the value of critical and creative thinking, and with it, the worth of an individual human being." (Zipes, 2001, 40-1)

To state the obvious, a surface reading of *Toy Story 3* (Unkrich, 2010) proposes, for all intents and purposes a juvenile prison escape narrative. But is it such a departure from *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1995) and *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter, Brannon and Unkrich, 1999)? I contend that the first two installments of the *Toy Story* franchise are very much captivity-based films, or traditional

fairy tales (cautionary tales) using wartime and political captivity-based film genre characteristics (social control, fear, etc) and character identification concepts in order to imply an acceptance of subjugation and captivity as preferred forms of socialization.

In the process, and in the midst of the nearly unanimous critical triumph of the *Toy Story* franchise, the author proposes a rereading of the franchise in particular and Pixar productions in general. The article will argue that the films outdid earlier Disney movies in terms of social imagery by bringing into focus the conventional institutionalized meaning of “home” in prison films, as opposed to the traditional fairy tale safe haven of “home.” The toy characters in *Toy Story* are reminiscent of institutionalized inmates as they struggle to remain in, or return to, captivity. In all three films, the characters limit themselves to choosing their prisons.

The franchise appears to represent a confluence of Michel Foucault’s prisons as tools of social control thesis on one hand, and Jack Zipes’ theory of juvenile literature as institution of “narrative strategies for literary socialization” (Zipes 1995: 23) on the other hand. The author will attempt to answer the question: At what point does Zipes meet Foucault in *Toy Story*?

TOY STORY: THE MAINSTREAM VIEW

Mainstream critical acclaim of *Toy Story* (1995) was nearly universal and continues even to this day. Janet Maslin of The New York Times called it “a parent-tickling delight”, adding that “children will enjoy a new take on the irresistible idea of toys coming to life” (C9), and that some jokes “amuse children” (C12). Owen Gleiberman of *Entertainment Weekly* wrote that the film “has the purity, the ecstatic freedom of imagination, that’s the hallmark of the greatest children’s films” (74). Leonard Klady of *Variety Movie Reviews* wrote that “in addition to stylistic innovation, the film sports a provocative and appealing story that’s every bit the equal of this technical achievement” (1). Leslie Felperin in *Sight and Sound*, like most reviewers at the time and since, praised technical achievements (51). Mark I. Pinsky, in his admittedly Judeo-Christian interpretation and criticism of Disney’s oeuvre, *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust*, calls *Toy Story* a “wonderful” movie (xvi). An academic literature review of the film unsurprisingly yields a nearly unanimous coverage of the technical aspects of

the film, that are unarguably revolutionary; however there are very few, if any, comments or explorations of the social or the moral aspects of the film

An overview of the captivity-based genre itself on film or on television is needed. For the purpose of this study, political and civil imprisonment films will be used. Indeed, the political imprisonment sub-genre template reveals many similarities to *Toy Story*, as well as some telling differences relevant to the realm of juvenile fiction. Nineteenth-century literary socialization suggested by Zipes as well as a swift survey of Disney and Pixar productions will follow in an attempt to situate the film into context.

DEFINING THE PRISON GENRE

Scholars' exploration into the prison film genre and its specific characteristics have been fruitful. One writer, Bruce Crowther (1989) considered stereotypes specific to prison films, mostly since *The Big House* (Hill, 1930). "The 'square Jon', a con with his own standards of honesty and natural leader of men; the 'rat', a squealing informer; the well-meaning but ultimately ineffectual warden...; the bullying, sadistic guard, and the unrepentant con whose conduct inside the walls is little different to that which sent him here" (8). For his own study Paul Mason (2006) dwells on the milieu and set-ups as well as the different types of characters. He lists some of the requirements which I will use later; he limits his filmography to motion pictures depicting "civil imprisonment" that "are mainly set within the walls of a prison or use prison as a central theme" (617). I would contend, with Crowther, that films about political or war-related imprisonment do meet the criteria as well. *The Last Castle* (Lurie, 2001), *Stalag 17* (Wilder, 1953), *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (Wrede, 1970), *The Great Escape* (Sturges, 1963) as well as *Kapò* (Pontecorvò, 1959) are examples of wartime jail setting. Although there is a difference between featuring criminal or alleged criminal characters who purportedly murdered, kidnapped or racketeered on one hand, and prisoners held because of their religious beliefs, political convictions and/or drafted into combat on the other hand, the main mood of fear (as mentioned below) as well as the general setting, the underlying themes of justice and relation of power, the occasional escape attempt and base characters (the informant,

the guards and warden or camp commandant, the conflicts between inmates and administration, etc) are similar. Both Sean O’Sullivan (2001) and Nichole Rafter (cited by O’Sullivan) are of the opinion that prison films feature the usual suspects, namely the “young innocent, a knowing old con, the stool pigeon, the sadistic warden/chief of guards, etc)... [and] the struggle of the prisoners against the tyranny of the authorities” (O’Sullivan, 320). Rafter states, in accord with Mason as well as Austin Sarat (2001), that such films are basically escapist and system injustices are eventually righted (as cited by O’Sullivan, 320).

Here are some characteristics of the captivity-based genre, partially based on Mason’s criteria; I apply them to both civil *and* political captivity-based films. They will be pertinent to *Toy Story* later on.

1. Physical Setting: The physical environment is a narrative device: the dark, damp stone walls, the echoing steps of the guards and/or inmates, the clanging of keys, the never ending wait. It could be argued that few elements distinguish a medieval dungeon setting from a contemporary jail except the costumes and the mechanized doors. The films do not always open in a prison, but the “big house” (building, bars, staff), the judicial apparatus (judges, lawyers, police) are for the most part present. For instance, *Con Air* (West, 1997) is set primarily in an aircraft; however it is a transport for prisoners guarded by prison personnel and with one inmate who had spent 25 of his 39 years in jail. In this specific instance, the aircraft is more than a narrative device, it envelops all characters the same way jail cells, brick walls, bunk beds and communal showers are integral parts of the carceral experience.

2. Fear and Violence: The mood of almost constant retribution (*Midnight Express* [Allan Parker, 1978] *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* [LeRoy, 1932], *The Bridge on the River Kwai* [Lean, 1957], *Beloved* [Demme, 1999]) is evocative of any captivity-based narrative. Fear is to be found inside and outside the prison walls. *Oz*’s Augustus Hill, the unofficial historian/narrator of the institution, comments that “there’s always, in Oz, an undercurrent of fear, of violence, of hate.”

3. Dehumanization and Identity Issues: In *Kapò* (Pontecorvò, 1959), a prisoner walking to her death confronts the remaining inmates, those who will live and who avoid eye contact with her: “They turned you into sheep.” Prison films tend to portray inmates gradually robbed of their identities (Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy 1981: 27. The authors call the process “mechanical subjugation” (26). The narrative usually stresses the process through which an inmate’s spirit and individuality is supposed to bend and break (*I am a Fugitive... [Le Roy]*, *A Clockwork Orange* [Kubrick, 1971], *Brute Force* [Hellinger, 1947]). The prison film is mainly about the “numbered man among a mass of numbered, regimented, anonymous blank-faced men facing soul-destroying incarceration” (Crowther 1989: 7). In order to remain alive, *Kapò*’s Édith/Nicole has already denied being Jewish, changed her name, lost her virginity to her captors and felt compelled to accept the position of “kapò” to submit her fellow inmates to further humiliation. Inmates often regain their identity in prison films after a successful escape. Nicole is Édith again but only at the price of her life. Foucault’s argument that prisons are (re)socialization tools is relevant to the dehumanization process. The intention behind behavior modification, noble or otherwise, is reflected in *A Clockwork Orange*, as well as the warden’s expressed frustration at his inability to change Stroud in *Birdman of Alcatraz* (Frankenheimer, 1962). In *Toy Story*, the intention will be to modify Buzz’s character.

4. Routine: In *Oz* (*Oz* 1999-2003) we are immediately introduced to the everyday ritual associated with prison life as Officer Whittlesey utters her litany to new arrivals. Routine is an integral part of social control in prisons (films or real). *Oz*’s Augustus Hill says it best: “The routine’ll kill you.”

5. Antagonism: Namely, the obvious and often violent animosity between inmates and the administration of the correctional facility as in *Birdman of Alcatraz*. The administration’s mission of “social control” and confinement naturally conflicts with the inmates’ so-called impulses towards either “deviance” or simple resistance; the enmity is akin to class differences and struggle.

6. **“Numbered Men”**: Prisoners are physically marked (slaves and concentration camps prisoners were typically branded or tattooed and most inmates wear the mandatory numbered and tagged uniform). There is a scene in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* where the captains routinely repaint the inmates’ faded numbers on both their jackets and caps. One is reminded of Crowther’s “numbered men”. In *Oz*, Tobias Beecher replied to the proposal to get tattooed: “Livestock get branded.” “Livestock”, says his new cellmate, “that’s what you are. My livestock.” In the ultimate metaphor of captivity (to paraphrase Roffman) leaving its imprint on inmates, *Prison Break*’s Michael Scofield has the prison plans tattooed on his body in order to escape.
7. **The Outsider**: One of the inmates, usually the main protagonist, is an outcast both outside and inside the big house. Sergeant Sefton (*Stalag 17*), Luke Jackson in *Cool Hand Luke* (Rosenberg, 1967), Capitan Hiltz (*The Great Escape*), Tobias Beecher in *Oz*. This outsider sometimes feels unwelcomed in or out of jail; he wants to either “see the world” or “escape”. James Allen in *I am a Fugitive...* explains his rejection of factory work: “I do not want to spend the rest of my life answering to a factory whistle...I want to get out, away from the routine...start a new life... be free.” He escapes twice.
8. **Death Row**: Narratives of prison films naturally have interaction between inmates, except in the case of death row inmates habitually living in isolation (*Dead Man Walking* [Robbins, 1995], *The Green Mile*, *Angels with Dirty Faces* [Curtiz, 1938]). Mason calls the death row films a subset of the prison genre as the narrative structure is quite different: the focus is on “one or several protagonists destined for execution” (Mason 2006: 619) as opposed to showing the general population or escape planning and/or attempt (*Great Escape*, *Escape from Alcatraz* [Siegel, 1979], *Stalag 17*).
9. **Homosexuality**: The theme of homosexuality, sexual assaults, issues of dominant/dominated usually thread through the prison films (*American History X*, *Shawshank Redemption* [Darabont, 1994], *25th Hour* [Lee, 2002])

10. **Dead End:** Most prison films feature dead end activity and bleak future. Crowther writes that juvenile prison films like *Scum* (Clarke, 1979) “helped reinforce the public’s imagination of how degrading and frightening such establishments can be and helped underline the futility of expecting anything good to come out of them” (75). “There are only two ways out of here: walk out or die out”, says an inmate in *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*.
11. **Escape:** Some films are concentrating exclusively on the planning and execution of escaping the camp/prison/island/etc (*Papillon* [Schaffner, 1973], *The Great Escape*, among others)
12. **The Mole or Collaborator:** I keep this item last as I deem one aspect of it more of a difference than a similarity, actually revealing the ideology juvenile animated films, as I will explain by the end of this article. Prison films inmates must conform to two seemingly contradictory rules: the prison strict system of regulations, and the inmates’ ruthless rules of conducts (*American History X* [Kaye, 1998], also see #4 above). This characteristic triggers a narrative device of opposition where one of the inmates sides with the administration for motive of self preservation: the collaborator in *Kapò* is an important character within the context of this study. Pontecorvò’s “kapò” is a prisoner openly working for the prison administration. Other instances include Sefton suspected of being an informant in *Stalag 17*, the courtship for the mole in *The Last Castle*. Most World War II camp or ghetto movies (also captivity-based subgenre) depict collaborators, for instance Jewish Police in *Schindler’s List* (Spielberg, 1993) or *The Pianist* (Polanski, 2002).

Very few, if any, prison films openly root for the correctional administration; nearly all feature one or more inmates as victims (wrongly accused, etc) therefore the audience tends to identify with *against* the administration. The counterpart of this statement is that both Sarat (2001) and Mason (2006), although agreeing to the premise, also contend that for the most part, the depiction of graphic violence in the prison genre films is a commercial end in itself and tends to overshadow some of the social issues that such films *appear* to address (inmate as a victim,

challenges to justification of the prison system itself, the effectiveness of capital punishment, the creation of monsters later to be released in society, etc) but never really tackle (*The Green Mile* [Darabont, 1999] is strikingly non-committal when it comes to such issues, skirting them to display a willing-to-die inmate and a spectacularly botched execution.) Sarat and Mason are of the opinion that most mainstream prison films actually endorse the correctional system they seem to deplore on the surface. For instance *Sleepers* (Levinson, 1996) condemns the main characters' imprisonment but condones the "other" inmates' incarceration (Mason 2006: 617). *Just Cause* (Glimcher, 1995) conclusion actually vindicates a dubious judicial apparatus, from alleged police beating to a substandard trial of which the rest of the film appeared to be highly critical. The *other* is the one for whom confinement is justifiable ("the sisters" in *Shawshank*, Blair Sullivan in *Just Cause*, etc). Although the films succeed into creating an identification/sympathy link between one character and the audience (Matthew Poncelet in *Dead Man Walking*, or Aaron in *Primal Fear* [Hoblit, 1996] and Bobby Earl in *Just Cause*, before their respective plot twists) the system is not depicted as the enemy and survives unscathed from the process. Roffman & Purdy wrote that prison systems "social themes are always secondary to the melodrama built around the hero and his particular situation" (28). Likewise, the trompe l'oeil graphics and the drama constructed around the main characters in *Toy Story* take center stage compared to the seemingly unimportant issues at hand, mainly socialization and subjugation.

The socialization process examined in some of the films (see point #4) is relevant to this study of *Toy Story*. Foucault's thesis of the prison system as an apparatus and mechanism for the control and subjugation of the body, finds its root in the exploration of the French prison system, of course, but can be illustrated by the "captain"'s numerous efforts at bringing Luke into the fray in *Cool Hand Luke*. How is the body being used, metaphorically and literally, in Foucault's argument?. The issue of subjugation in prisons is studied in films and society as a whole in Roffman (27). Foucault's theory encompasses the capture of body and spirit.

FOUCAULT

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, an exploration of prisons as a relationship to

power as well as a metaphor for society as a whole, is an influential and seminal work of social and philosophical literature. His thesis of the political theory of the body is relevant here. Foucault describes the concepts of political anatomy and the “mechanics of power”, controlling docile bodies in order to manipulate the “soul”. “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)... [O]n the one hand, it turns [the body] into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’, which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection” (138). Prisons *are* tools of socialization, from Foucault’s perspective, and according to him, it is no accident that the concepts he explores have been found in military and schools settings (139-141); later he more explicitly asks “is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals...?” (228). Before applying some of Foucault’s ideas to the franchise, it is useful to quickly survey *Toy Story* as well as situate it within Disney/Pixar’s productions.

How does *Toy Story* fit into this genre? How does one position *Toy Story* relative to Disney, Pixar and fairy tales in general?

FROM DISNEY TO PIXAR

Zipes (1995) expertly argues that Disney productions are to be defined as modern fairy tales. He contends, citing Rüdiger Steinlein, that by the early nineteenth century fairy tales produced and distributed to juveniles were intended for “the domestication of the imagination.” He goes on: “The form and structure of the fairy tale for children were carefully regulated in the nineteenth century so that improper thoughts and ideas would not be stimulated in the minds of the young” (24). He calls the early tales “narrative strategies for literary socialization.” Zipes maintains that Disney appropriated the position formerly held by the likes of Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm Brothers.

Byrne et al. relate the “home” motif to Disney’s own castle imagery used in Pixar/Disney films. “The castle is a singularly European invention bearing testimony to a history of siege and oppression, of Christianity and kingship, and of the secure defence of the logic of inside-outside”

(173). Even the recent *Up* (2009) tagline is “his greatest adventure will be to get back home.” Disney has been associated with conservative propaganda (Henry A. Giroux, Eleanor Byrne et al. to name only two) for decades. Already in 1971 Ariel Dorfman and Armand Matterlart wrote that “attacking Disney is no novelty” (95). On- and off-screen Disney activities have been examined in such landmark studies as *From Mouse to Mermaid* (Bell 1995), *Mouse Morality* (Ward 2002) and *Deconstructing Disney* (Byrne et al. 1999), among others. Ward examines Disney’s technique and influence through five animated feature films. She cites Giroux’ article on the “persuasive” role the films “play as the new ‘teaching machine’” (2). The “films inspire at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values, and ideas [as] more traditional sites of learning such as public schools, religious institutions, and the family” (3) She includes a number of values potentially learned from a viewing of *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994): one of the values is “obedience to one’s parents is right. Simba is disciplined – and suffers consequences – for disobedience” (31). The author of this article directs the reader to works like Ward’s to explore Disney as an educator. *Song of the South* (Foster & Jackson, 1946) is infamous for featuring slaves seemingly content with their captivity; although the film is admittedly a more serious spot on Disney’s already questionable legacy, I would argue that Pixar’s agenda exceeds its parent company.

Disney appears to impose the American dream upon others (Dorfman 1971: 95), but Pixar seems to disparage ambition. Faithful to cautionary tales, Pixar characters and narratives show aspirations only to be crushed and never attempted again; little is learned in the process other than to stay put. When they stray from the cautionary axiom, characters are violently being moved back home, home being incarceration. Submissiveness to a higher authority appears to go unquestioned; human cruelty is implied, omnipresent and acceptable.

Traditionally Disney’s films have modestly encouraged some class movements like *Snow White* (Hand, 1938) “celebrating the triumph of the banished and the underdogs” (Zipes 1995: 37) or when the puppet Pinocchio becomes human, or the clumsy elephant Dumbo (Sharpsteen, 1941) shines as a flying elephant after being jailed; the princess’ descent from riches to rags, then ascend to riches again in *Cinderella* (Geronimi et al., 1950), the street rat becomes a prince after being briefly imprisoned in *Aladdin* (Clements & Musker, 1992). Belle fancies a life outside her

village and away from Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale & Wise, 1991); although the beast detains her, she is freed. According to Byrne et al., Disney traditionally features characters who want to see the world (24-25) and at times successfully reach that goal. Byrne explains that Disney's selling of the American dream around the world had "special resonance related to the consumerist deprivations of communism" (24). Whatever we think of Disney's ideology, the films featured at least some "personal freedom" and "the pursuit of happiness" (25). Narratives were designed to sell a Western/capitalist way of life (Byrne's analysis of *The Little Mermaid* [Clements & Musker, 1989] is excellent in that respect, with the surface/Western world vs. the mer/socialist world, 19-36). Whatever conclusion the narratives came to, the characters were allowed hopes and aspirations, albeit within an established order (Cuomo 1994: 216).

Toy Story featured characters without ambitions whose dreams, however small, are punished by human rules. In that regard, Pixar is much more faithful to Zipes' traditional, cautionary fairy tales definition than Disney ever was, and the tendency predates an association with Disney. *Red's Dream* (Lasseter, 1987) is, in this author's opinion, the most spectacular in that respect as the unicycle's dreams of glory, whether reminiscent of past events or fantasies, had him punished by being consigned to a bicycle store, forgotten in a corner and unwanted at half-price; the movie ends with a zoom out on a depressed and lonely red unicycle accompanied by jazz music and pouring rain, tribute to beleaguered film noir characters. The one-man band of *Tin Toy* (Lasseter, 1988) comes to accept his life as an abused machine and even pursues his torturer for attention. *Knick Knack* (Lasseter, 1989) ends as the snowman doubles his prison walls after attempting to escape his dome.

Post *Toy Story*, creations follow the same template, although we can identify two characters allowed to dream. Nemo in *Finding Nemo* (Stanton and Unkrich, 2003) has one aspiration: to leave the coral and visit the world, until he finds out he can't, given the horrible consequences including kidnapping and imprisonment in a fish tank. In *A Bug's Life* (Lasseter and Stanton, 1998), Flik is ordered by the Queen to accept the domination of the grasshoppers: "It's our lot in life. It's not a lot, but it's our life." Flik proves the queen wrong only to entrench himself in a

sedentary life in which his world is revealed to comprise no more than a tiny island of grass. The lamb in *Boundin'* (Luckey, 2003) has a coat so beautiful that it was “a source of great pride” and “it caused him to preen.” Once he is shorn by a faceless shepherd (a sheep *guard*), he is ashamed and ridiculed by his former fans. An American Jackalope teaches him to accept his condition and the lamb lets himself be sheared because “he learned to live with it; he didn’t care”, even extending his leg in order to be pulled and to assist the human in charge of clipping. The connotation of a lamb submitted to human abuses reaches a level of social and religious symbolism that is hard to miss.

TOY STORY

Toy Story starts from Andy’s point of view, off-screen as we see the action through his eyes. He is physically battering his toys which he sets against each other (Potato Head v. Woody); Woody the sheriff “wins” and Potato Head is thrown into a crib with a sign taped to the bars that reads “JAIL”.



Figure 1. Potato Head behind bars in John Lasetter’s *Toy Story*

Woody, with an eternal grin, is violently projected on furniture and hurled downstairs. It is in the middle of this abuse sequence that the POV shifts from Andy to Woody, transfer accompanied by Randy Newman’s score. The soft music and Woody’s smirk at once underplay and vindicate the cruelty of the situation. The importance of the opening sequence lies in the fact that the POV

has been established: it is Andy's. However Andy, who will not dominate any other scene in the movie, and having established his authority over his possessions, has no further need of marking his territory. The change in POV indicates the delegation of authority to his surrogate, Woody. Andy loves his toys, we are told, but he is not much kinder to them than the malicious Sid, his neighbor; Andy stops short of reducing his toys to smithereens (Ackerman 2005: 897) and for all their differences, Sid and Andy represent the same world order to the toys, both malignant in their treatment of them. It is worth noticing that the two parallel worlds of humans and toys rarely interact except in case of abuse.

During their ensuing "staff meeting" where the relation to power is made explicit, Woody explains that the toys are there for Andy, this is their *raison d'être*. "It doesn't matter how much we are played with", Woody explains, "What matters is that we're here when Andy needs us. That's what we're made for, right?" The different toys have already internalized their conditions and Woody, the "kapò" of the group, teaches them, classroom style, the correct and acceptable behavior expected from them.

In the middle of preparations for a move scheduled to take place two days later, the sudden arrival of newer toys during a birthday party disrupts the environment and everyone worries about becoming "garage sale fodder." This starts a motif elaborated upon in darker tones in *Toy Story 2* and *Toy Story 3* of toys living in constant fear of being replaced (discarded, terminated) following damage or irrelevance.

In *Toy Story*, the new toy Buzz Lightyear emerges as a threat to Woody's position as leader of the toy pack; standing on a bed with Woody in the background, the camera slowly reveals a shiny and fully equipped toy, contrasting with Woody's marionette qualities. However Buzz, the outsider, evinces no interest in taking over Woody's responsibilities; he is oblivious to the toys' situation as he thinks he is visiting another planet. His nature is clear: he is a member of the elite Universe Protection Unit of the Space Ranger Corps of the Galactic Alliance, loaded with wings and laser beam, and uttering his motto with assertiveness: "To infinity, and beyond!".

Woody attempts to put Buzz in his supposed proper social layer by declaring to the other toys that Buzz is a T-O-Y, whereas Buzz insists he is a Space Ranger. So far, Woody is the educator, the head slave to his flock, he rightfully fears for his position as the political and social leader of his constituency.

Like a self-contained prison, life goes on. Buzz's positive thinking gets him out of trouble or at least allows him to reach out to other individuals in his new group who seem impressed by his boldness, his independence and his abilities. Buzz assists the neurotic and timid Rex in finding his roar and gaining some confidence, which helps Rex assert himself as an individual and a dinosaur. Buzz establishes his individuality by affirming his autonomy and aloofness from the politics of Andy's room. His immediate concern is to repair his spaceship in order to rendezvous with the rest of his fleet. The others are captivated by his brilliance and his vocabulary: for him, a piece of tape is a "unidirectional bonding strip" and a safety belt is a "restraining harness". As a matter of fact, Buzz becomes the new leader of the toys *and* Andy's favorite without even trying, a proof of coolness. Andy has even "marked" him, writing his name underneath Buzz's boot while Woody could not help noticing that his own "Andy" mark was fading off and needed repainting.

Buzz comes out as a disrupter of social mores within the small community of Andy's room toys but he grants the toys hope for a better and brighter future: they start working out, if only to look better and even having lives of their own.. Buzz reminds one of Luke in *Cool Hand Luke*. "*Cool Hand Luke* depicts a foredoomed life that provides an uplifting message for the central character's fellow inmates and, perhaps, to the wider audience" (Crowther 1989: 34). Luke and Buzz, in their respective movies, are the outsiders granting some hope to their fellow captives. Luke's warden and captain would not allow it, the same way Woody, the kapò, would proactively prevent Buzz from attempting to distract their friends from their condition. Woody is the American icon par excellence, a cowboy: he represents law and order (he is a sheriff, after all) and is *expected* to secure some kind of status quo. Woody is also an "old school" rag toy, unquestionably and physically compliant to power. The "Made in Taiwan" Buzz is the newer, upgraded, modern, solid plastic, literally space age toy probing around, not fully understanding

his relationship to an American sovereign authority (other than Star Command).

But Buzz's provenance as the "outsider" is the element about to open that jail. The Asian "menace" to the American icons are played out as modern v. traditional, the trendy plastic Buzz (animated TV show in the 90s likely produced in Asia) against the classic cowboy (his marionette black and white broadcast from the 50s, reminiscent of early American productions). The element is to be tamed in order to preserve order in jail (*Last Castle, Shawshank Redemption, Cool Hand Luke*).

Buzz watches a television advertisement based on his already existing TV show personae: the ad shows hundreds of Buzz Lightyears sitting on store shelves, immobile and waiting to be sold. The audio summarizes Buzz's descent: "Buzz Lightyear, the world's greatest superhero! Now the world's greatest toy!" Buzz checks his parts, finds out where he has been produced, feels shame followed by a deep depression after accidentally breaking an arm. He is not an original but a reproduction of the television Buzz; all dreams of individuality crumble. Buzz must eventually abide by Western genre and ideology, as well as American dreams and the fairy tale concept of "home".

TOY STORY AS A PRISON FILM

Toy Story follows the prison genre template to its ultimate logical ending, outdoing most prison media objects. Jail imagery, by its very nature, does suggest severe limitations: for Roffman and Purdy, prison is the "ultimate metaphor of social entrapment." Except for the opening scene and at Sid's where Woody is caged in a plastic milk box, *Toy Story* constantly infer to the threat of captivity and it does submit the prospect of harsh punishment should one of the toys threaten social order or fail to entertain.



Figure 2. Woody as an inmate in Sid's room in *Toy Story*

Toy Story features a character as an outsider (the “other”, Buzz as the out-of-town toy from Taiwan) menacing the carceral order of Andy’s room; the character’s descent from grandiose to a simple reproduction is reminiscent of prison characters’ fall from grace like Allen in *I am a Fugitive...*, Dragline in *Cool Hand Luke*. We recognize both Andy and Sid’s rooms as jail cells (the crib); Crowther’s stereotype of the “square Jon”, a “natural leader of men” suits Woody who fits the bill perfectly; he is the “boss”, so to speak, of the place. The “squealing informer” is also Woody, in the sense that he is implementing all of humankind’s policies and procedures regarding toys, he is the kapò, as I contended. The “warden” and the “bullying, sadistic guard” are Sid who could be construed as a warden and his dog Skud, interpreting the guard role.

One could argue that “role reversal” inherent to captivity films (and explored in Foucault as resistance but to a lesser extent than the control mechanism) is absent in fairy tale, although some reversals happen accidentally: Cinderella does obtain satisfaction and the prince, but more through sheer luck than competence. Happy endings occur by fate more than hard work. In non-juvenile text, the reversal of situation is more deliberate. *The Last Castle* major plot is about inmates and administration switching place. This is one major aspect where juvenile media objects in general and *Toy Story* in particular, differ from adult-oriented texts: resistance. The variables are many: in *Toy Story* the toys do not fight back for the most part as they *are* toys after all and realistically can’t expect much out of their condition. They *have* been created by humans and are presumed to fulfill their social functions undisputedly. The audience is told a

narrative where defiance is barely mentioned, where the moral implications of submissiveness are not debated (hence inexistent) but, like a fairy tale according to Zipes, imagination is domesticated. In many prison films, the resistance aspect of the conflict is greatly stressed and the characters usually end up with their dignity. *Toy Story* is missing the resistance element. Woody does have an opportunity to reverse roles with Sid as he actually “wins” a revolt against him, but the toys quickly settle down to choose their jails. The *Toy Story* franchise is a captivity-based genre without the moral ambivalence. Woody concludes the rebellion against Sid, not by overthrowing him, but by the simple: “Play nice.”

It is timely to replay and to categorize some concepts of *Toy Story* and connect them to previously mentioned criteria of prison films.

1. **Physical Setting:** *Toy Story* is not a typical prison film, but neither is *Con Air*. However *Toy Story* does open with a prison scene with the words JAIL posted on a baby crib; toys are abused; later on Woody is imprisoned in a plastic box, sharing the “cell” with a copy of “Improvised Interrogation Handbook”; Woody is a sheriff, an officer of the law in charge of his flock of toys, confined to Andy’s room (a cell with a closed door), Woody and Buzz do attempt to escape (from Sid to Andy, back in jail...) and the toys are “branded” in a way similar to inmates having their numbers painted on their persons. As prison movies offer a parallel world rarely overlapping with ours, *Toy Story* provides a portrayal of parallel realities where human and toy worlds interact only in abuse situations. Viewers are comfortably gazing at someone else’s misery (voyeuristic) as a prison movie. There is no warden or uniformed guard walking around with a set of keys, but the importance of the opening sequence sets the tone for the rest of the film. Andy and Sid’s homes are both restraining physical settings from which any attempt at escaping is nearly hopeless and dangerous.
2. **Fear and Violence:** “Terrible thing, to live in fear”, says Red in *The Shawshank Redemption*. The notion of fear of being discarded in *Toy Story* is more than a simple narrative device: it is the primary cause of subjugation for the toys. In a prison film the deviance could be a stabbing, an assault or any failure to please the administration or one’s fellow inmates. Andy Dufresne in *Shawshank Redemption* not only has to fend off

the “sisters” frequent assaults, do the warden’s finances and bidding, and is yet not permitted to claim his innocence as the warden kills an inmate promising to testify on Andy’s behalf; for his request of clemency he spends two months in the hole. As per the toys’ crime: obsolescence and failure to entertain. *Toy Story 2* is absolutely clear in that respect; Wheezy the penguin, Jessie the cowgirl and Woody are prime candidates for discard just for being unwanted as Wheezy is thrown in the next garage sale bin; Jessie for her part had already tasted the bitter fruit of rejection, ending up in a box on the side of the road. But the relationships of power are far more relevant than at first sight. The similarities are striking with other wartime captivity-based movies. In *Schindler’s List*, Schindler tells a sobbing Helen, a camp inmate abused by the Commandant, “He won’t shoot you because he’s enjoying you too much.” In *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Denisovich has to conform lest he be thrown in isolation or executed; likewise the toys have to *perform* well to amuse appropriately in order to avoid being disposed of. As Wheezy, Jessie and Woody find out, being outmoded or disabled is a death warrant in the toy world. The situation is displayed in a light and humorous fashion, as opposed to the natural dark overtone of prison movies. In *Kapò*, in the words of one inmate, “one wound, one sore is all it takes” in order to be selected for the gas chamber; once a wounded inmate is “discarded” she is replaced by another “newer” prisoner the same way *Toy Story* toys are supplanted by newer toys. See #13 “The Mole” for more related “fear” topics.

3. **Dehumanization and Identity Issues:** The dehumanization of inmates (the *other*) goes hand in hand with the socialization process. The prime objective of a jail is to break the newly-come inmate spirit. Prison films show inmates being dehumanized in graphic fashion. James Allen (Paul Muni), back from the Great War publicly claims that he does not wish to be a number in a factory or to answer to a whistle in *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*; he wants to make his name in construction. The next few minutes show how he is rejected by all, fired, arrested in a bungled armed robbery and thrown in jail. Over time (and beatings) he has his personality practically removed and replaced. The toys *are* dehumanized in *Toy Story* from the start, being anthropomorphic plastic/metal/rag

playthings. The major plotline is to make sure Buzz's remnant of individuality is removed by the end of the film. Buzz's education, wrapped in the guise of a raise of consciousness of his individuality but really a traumatic and diminishing experience. The obedient inmates in *One Day in the Life... I am a Fugitive...* or *Kapò* remind one of Foucault's docile bodies and the various strategies used to break and coerce bodies (Foucault, 168). Woody and Buzz follow this pattern and prove how docile they are in the hands of their owner and how Buzz ends up abiding by Woody's dictates. Woody's soft body is potty in Andy's hands; Buzz's plastic build does not lend itself so easily to manipulation and it is only after he breaks one of his arms that he accepts his status as toy/inmate. John Lasseter's uses of rag and plastic dolls, which one could interpret as symbols of docility and submissiveness, coupled with the dehumanization of anthropomorphized beings, also reminds us of prison bodies subjugated to the will of organizations. Buzz wants to be an individual but is pulled into the collective. "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'" (Foucault, 194).

4. **Routine:** While *Toy Story* characters follow a less rigid schedule than prison films individuals are nonetheless subjected to certain rituals revolving around Andy's school and vacation schedules, for instance, or his birthday party. The moment an unscheduled or unusual event occurs (the moving), the toys feel threatened. The arrival of a new toy (like new inmates in jail) also promises to modify social order in Andy's room.
5. **Antagonism:** *Toy Story* clearly delineates two parallel worlds, the toys and the humans they serve. The two analogous universes of administration and inmates, whose common interests rarely meet (*Shawshank*, *One Day in the Life...*, *Just Cause*) is mirrored in *Toy Story* through the interaction between, on one hand, Andy and his family and, on the other hand, the toys. Andy is the warden as he is nearly as cruel as Sid, and because he is a perfect illustration of Foucault's thesis of domination of the body (26). Humans *can not* care about toys' needs, aspiration and wants as toys are deemed artificial and dead. Whether Woody or Buzz end up being Andy's favorite is immaterial to Andy, as long as

he owns at least one toy. Audiences of all ages *have* to identify with toys as humans are practically invisible in *Toy Story* and as the POV has been shifted very early on to Woody. The inmates or the toys are still subjected to different degree of dehumanization, with a warden or under Andy, as Ackerman contends (2005: 898).

6. **“Numbered Men”**: In *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* the captains of each and every group repaint the faded identification numbers on inmates’ caps and jackets.



Figure 3. Inmate number C854 (Tom Courtenay) being marked in Caspar Wrede’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

- 7.

Life signs are disappearing slowly from the gulag residents’ faces, replaced by prison administration’s mark of ownership. Denisovich is C 854. An inmate tells Nicole in *Kapò* that “they” cannot rob you of your identity or dignity. Dufresne states in *Shawshank* that “they” cannot take your dreams and hope away from you. Hope is the emotion sustaining the inmates in *Kapò* but elusive to one of the kapòs: she comments contemptuously about the camp inmates that “they’re worst than animals; at least animals know when they are going to die.” In *Toy Story* the toys have been branded already by Andy who inscribed his name on them, but here ends the similarities; *Toy Story* toys’ dreams are nightmares

(*Toy Story 2*), they interpret the markings as a sign of pride and a rise of social status and have no hope or plan for their future other than to remain confined.



Figure 4. Buzz proudly display his mark of ownership in *Toy Story*.

8. **The Outsider:** The theme of the outsider in prison movies is mirrored in *Toy Story* with the arrival of Buzz. Like prison outsiders (Luke Jackson, Sefton, etc) he is one of the main characters, a narrative device creating dramatic tension between the other “inmates” and/or with the authorities (Andy). The establishing POV in *Toy Story* is Andy/Woody’s, making Buzz the “other”. The outsider generally wishes out. At first Buzz wants out as well in order to join forces with Space Command and defend the galaxy, but after he is convinced of the futility of such action he too becomes institutionalized to turn into the main educator in *Toy Story 2*, making him a *kapò* who, like Édith, changes to develop into one, unlike Woody who appears to have adopted the position from the beginning.
9. **Death Row:** Death row films form a subset of their own where inmates are usually isolated. In *Kapò* the female inmates live in constant fear of the “selection” process during which a simple sore is a ticket to gas chambers; Nicole is forced to sexual manipulation after she comprehends that her sores are her death warrant. The episode in *Toy Story 2* where Wheezy and Woody discuss their eventual possible demise is the only instance in both movies which is reminiscent of the death row genre subset. In *Toy Story*

2 Woody (torn arm) is set apart on a high shelf where none, human or toy, can easily reach him; isolated, he finds Wheezy (broken whistle) and they realize they have been set for discard, virtually a death sentence. Interestingly Buzz breaks an arm in *Toy Story* and Woody's arm is ripped in *Toy Story 2*; both times are fundamental turning points towards the characters epiphany and consciousness of their environments and destiny, as well as indications that the two toys reach a level of depression from which they will barely recover. Conversely the scarecrow's arm burning sequence in *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, LeRoy and Vidor, 1939) is a decisive moment when the straw man finds some assertiveness. The characters in *Toy Story* lack ambitions and dreams and have accepted their condition; given their natures they seem to have little say or choice. Roffman et al. cite the prison movies "lack of options" as "most concrete and extreme... Any hesitancy, rebellion, or even sickness only wins the prisoner a brutal whipping" (26). The authors were writing about prison films in the 30s (*I am a Fugitive...* or *The Big House*) but to apply this reading to *Toy Story* you need to consider how each and every toy is scared to death of obsolescence.

10. **Homosexuality:** The terms homosexuality or gay or even anything remotely connected to a sexual relationship are never explicitly uttered in either *Toy Story* or *Toy Story 2*. However Woody displays a great deal of jealousy when Andy elects to sleep with Buzz and he is relegated to the box (the hole?); in the sequel he seems reluctant to upset Buzz when Bo wants to kiss him ("Not in front of Buzz"). The tone is in keeping with juvenile narratives, but the allusions, intended or not, stand out from the rest of both movies.
11. **Dead End:** The impasse theme of prison movies is very much present in *Toy Story*. Be it only for their preordained discard ("what will happen when Andy goes to college?", forewarning *Toy Story 3*), the toys live this daily existential fear blindly and philosophically, aware of their dead end fate, reminiscent of *I am a Fugitive...* comment on one of the ways to come out of jail, dead, in a box. Woody dreams he ends up at the bottom of a refuse can, forced back in by other discarded toys.

12. **Escape:** Is *Toy Story* an escape movie? Yes, and so is *Toy Story 2*. *Toy Story 3* is tagged as a “Great Escape” film, complete with both titles in the poster. But whereas escape prison movies feature the efforts of inmates to dig their way out of the big house, the toys in *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2* endeavor to escape the “outside” to get back in (different in *Toy Story 3* where they try to escape a prison built by another toy). For all intent and purposes, all three *Toy Story* movies are about escaping, but they are also about a debate on which prison is better (Sid or Andy? Al’s Barn or Andy? Lotso or their room?)
13. **The Mole or Collaborator:** To quote Red from *Shawshank* again, “prison is no fairy-tale world”. The fairy tale model which applies to Disney and Pixar movies (among others) is not always compatible with the prison genre. I wish to emphasize where the similarities *and* difference between prison films and *Toy Story* lie: within the theme of two distinct systems of rules which triggers one inmate to become a proxy for the administration in order to socialize the rest of the flock. In *Toy Story* Woody is the direct delegate of the “administration”, be it Andy or his mother (even the toys call her “mom”). The shift of POV at the start of the film is very telling. Humans’ rules are that the toys are supposed to entertain humans at all cost. Woody makes sure he communicates this edict to toys; Woody is the narrative device, so to speak, connecting human and toys worlds. He is the educator who attempts to convert Buzz to the new environment. Partnering with guards and warden is cause for fatal retribution in prison films (another source of fear); a number of “stool pigeons” and informers have met untimely death (*Stalag 17*). In Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, as well as in Caspar Wrede’s 1970 movie version, each prison “gang” is run by a “captain” or boss, a prisoner as the rest of his companions, whose function is to socialize his fellow inmates into submission. Woody, within the confine of comedic tone, is reminiscent of Solzhenitsyn’s captains. Like them and Gillo Pontecorvò’s kapòs, Woody is at once assertive and submissive, depending who he relates to. The gulag captains fear for the few privileges granted them, hence their zeal at enforcing laws and regulations evidently designed at crushing their spirits. In other words, they are greatly terrified of prison authorities (from the warden down) but have to inspire awe and respect among other inmates. Although Woody *is* the

kapò or “captain” the similarity ends there. The difference is that Woody is mostly *not* criticized by the rest of the toys for turning kapò. In that respect Woody and his toys are representatives of similar inmates in movies like *One Day in the Life...* in which the narrator explains that the “authorities invented the ‘teams’ so the guard shouldn’t have to drive the prisoners but the prisoners should drive one another.” In the long sequence where the inmates are building the habitats in the middle of the tundra, guards are barely seen, only other inmates scream at lower echelon prisoners, but all are dressed the same with two numbers painted on their uniforms. They have been regimented (visually reminiscent of hordes of workers in *Metropolis* [Lang, 1927]) into submission, managing themselves at times, imposing someone else’s will upon their own action. In *Toy Story* Woody is the one calling meetings and teaching his herd how to behave. *Toy Story* is also reminiscent of *One Day...* in the way authorities are not featured prominently but strongly suggested: the inmates and the toys are *expected* to implement the rules of socialization: the toys *are* institutionalized for the most part and function without human supervision. They have an army (green toy soldiers) to help them implement the rules.

This is the revealing difference between mainstream imprisonment films and *Toy Story*. Andy Dufresne (*Shawshank*) and James Allen (*I am a Fugitive...*), among others, are antagonists to the prison administration, at one level or another. Most inmates/prisoners turn saboteurs in their spare times. The toys in *Toy Story* never question their conditions. An institutionalized Red is fearful of the life “outside” the big house in *Shawshank* but does violate his parole in order to join Dufresne and attempt a new life in Mexico. Woody is as institutionalized as Red but, unlike Red, devotes most of his energy towards returning to the big house (Andy’s). Denisovich holds a religious debate with another inmate in *One Day in the Life...* and questions God’s role in his unfair imprisonment. The other inmate, carrying the optimistic side of the argument, asks Denisovich why he wishes to be free: in freedom, “what little faith you have will be lost in the turmoil. Rejoice that you’re in captivity.” He continues by comparing their fates to famous saints who died for their god; Denisovich replies that was good enough for them, but that does not explain his own unjust detention. He is the stereotypical movie inmate, somewhat

institutionalized but still imagining and longing for freedom. His fellow debater sees an impasse and opts to relish in his confinement. This is the same debate, expressed with different terms that Woody and Buzz are holding during the first *Toy Story*. Woody repeats to Buzz that he is a toy, a plaything, squinting his eyes and pinching his fingers to signify their unimportance, his body trembling with contempt and impatience. Buzz replies that he pities Woody, “a sad, strange little man,” and he strolls away. Later on Buzz will be converted, so to speak, through the mass media experience of a televised ad, and his adaptation will be made complete by the time the sequel starts. One is reminded of David Reisman’s fairy tale thesis that there is “freedom to be found in following the green lights” and guaranteed punishment through going off-track (cited in Kline, 64). Whereas the religious debater and Denisovich argue similar points, Woody and Buzz initiate, then immediately terminate the deliberation.

Toy Story 2 demonstrates how successful Buzz’s education has been as he is the new mentor. The imagery and dialog mimic *Toy Story* but uttered by Buzz this time. “We’re all toys”, claims Buzz. Matching Buzz’s conversion in *Toy Story*, Woody changes his mind after viewing old video clips of his show, symbolizing once more the influence of mass media in our lives. Furthermore, Woody becomes aware of his “normalness” after losing an arm; the physical hardship associated with socialization appears to facilitate the way to an epiphany. Buzz disparagingly echoes Woody exactly from *Toy Story*: “You’re a toy, a plaything!” Interestingly the toys are debating which prison would be more appropriate: being caged in a museum (behind glass) or with Andy.

Home and the Big House are two entirely different concepts, as Red would say. In captivity-based movies “home” carries an ambivalent meaning; institutionalized inmates like Brook (who spent fifty years in jail) in *Shawshank* refers to “returning home” as getting back to jail. The Big House earned its name, after all. “Home” is the expression of prudent behavior in cautionary fairy tales. Dorothy wants to return home from Oz, so does Carl in *Up*. *Toy Story* epitomizes the return home, to the place of confinement, to the Big House. Whereas inmates usually wish out, the toys struggle to reclaim their internment. The toys are institutionalized and self-managed like the “teams” in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and equate the concept of fairy tale home to a contented detention.

The Wizard of Oz's concept of "home" ("there's no place like home") is a classic and basic tenet of Western cautionary fairy tale and Dorothy pays dearly for her craving of adventure. She, like Woody, struggles to get back home (which she previously considered confining). Television's *Oz*'s concept of the big house is also home (Emerald City) to the inmates; *Toy Story*'s own notion of home and the big house merge both concepts of *Oz* and *The Wizard of Oz* as the toys strive to reclaim their cells and lose all aspirations.

To end the first *Toy Story*, both Woody and Buzz finally find their way to Andy: flying freely in a sky reminiscent of Andy's wallpaper, they appear to aim for the opened moving truck. However Buzz changes direction towards Andy's car. Once above the car they slow down and dive through the sunroof, right into a plastic box similar to the one Woody was imprisoned in Sid's room. In *Toy Story 2* the toys discuss which confinement is best (museum or Andy's). The imagination of the main characters (young audiences identify with them) has been domesticated, to paraphrase Zipes. Their bodies have been battered into submission, following Foucault. They choose their jail; they always opt for captivity. Zipes finally meets Foucault.

CONCLUSION

Various themes associated with prison films are common to the *Toy Story* franchise. The dehumanized bodies of the toys made up of plastic and other inorganic material along with the malleability related to toys of almost any kind, ought to conclude with the submissiveness usually found in the institutionalized prison inmates, but here celebrated as a desirable condition in a made for juvenile media object. *Toy Story* is a link in a nearly unbroken chain of Pixar highly successful, humorous stay-at-home and cautionary tale movies; it is for the most part a juvenile prison genre movie.

Enough has been written about American motion pictures destined to juvenile but to the author's knowledge none has explored the celebration of imprisonment as presented in a humorous and even witty fashion and as a suitable form of socialization to children. An argument could be made towards *Toy Story* as a spoof of prison films, a parody or homage. Or is it just a juvenile film descendant of Pixar conformist tradition? A philosophical reflection on the

limitation of human condition? Of course the film, like any oeuvre, may be a little bit of all of the above.

Toy Story is a direct descendant of earlier Pixar productions whose main characters are trapped or captive, have adapted to harbor little to no ambitions, or whose modest dreams are shattered never to be pursued again: the one man band (*Tin Toy*), the snowman (*Knick Knack*), Nemo and the *Toy Story* characters are devalued by the conclusion of their respective stories. The technical achievement and financial success of *Toy Story* stand in contrast to the character development of the narrative. *Toy Story* concludes on a promotion of diminished sense of worth and ambition within the context of the prison genre, but without the tension associated with prison films which traditionally feature antagonism between a perceived necessity to (re)socialize *and* a resistance to the attempt at conformity and education. *Toy Story* follows the templates of prison film *not* inclusive of a situation where inmates consciously pursue such resistance; when the toys do *appear* to resist (as Buzz is suspected of doing), they are re-educated. Buzz's own motto of "Infinity and Beyond" takes on a painful and cynical twist when we understand how limited his universe and ambition turn out to be.

Characters have internalized the rules of institutionalized prison as one where the incarceration is "home" and the relationships respect the norms of prison attributes and authorities, the difference being that the institutionalized commercial toys (representing the inmates) offer no resistance, contrary to un-institutionalized inmates acting under duress in mainstream prison movies. The *Toy Story* franchise is, in that respect, a representative of juvenile products.

Mason's thesis on mainstream prison films allegedly projecting a moderate agenda to ultimately prove to be voyeuristic and conformist vehicles could potentially apply to *Toy Story*, whose supposed and publicly perceived mission of being a children's film with inspiring impact (see earlier reviews of innocence and message of friendship) gives way to values at odds with such interpretations. To reiterate Roffman & Purdy's quote of social themes (28), and even

Rafter's premise of "escapism", *Toy Story* does not deviate from this axiom: Buzz and Woody's melodrama and suspenseful escapade blurs the social issues background to a coarse-grained haze. The assumed audience identification with the toy characters probably allows for an endorsement of Buzz and Woody's acceptance of their submissiveness.

A point could be argued that most if not all prison films *are* cautionary tales in nature, in which case Pixar's choice of prison as a narrative element/device in a cautionary tale makes sense.

Captivity-based films usually display class antagonism between authorities and inmates, but *Toy Story* proves its intention at aiming for juvenile audience by having events seen through the eyes of Woody who does not consider his abusive owner in an antagonist fashion but as a protector; although the toys constantly live in fear of being discarded, the film downplays any belligerence between the toys and Andy. *Toy Story* vindicates the imprisonment of "inmates" by openly rejoicing in their confinement. Pixar is not a pedagogical apparatus, of course, and it would be unfair to blame a for-profit company to fail to "educate", but their products are geared towards juveniles and the message conveyed is one of submission and low self-esteem through identification to the main characters. Socialization aims at a certain kind of submissiveness and obedience from the "educated" (Cavell et al. 2006: 48). Of course there is a giant leap between social learning and social control; but I would suggest that Foucault's thesis of asylums and prison as tools of social control appears to fit in with Zipes' children tales as tools of socialization, especially if the narrative foundation of a given media object seems to spring from the structure of mainstream prison narratives and appear to promote the exploitation of docile bodies.

Woody the rag doll represents Foucault's thesis of "docile bodies" in the literal sense (willingly lending his body to be abused) and the social sense (Woody promoting the submissiveness to Andy within a captivity-based setting, indeed marketing captivity as socialization tool). Buzz's broken, then mended, body in *Toy Story* and his re-programming in *Toy Story 3* illustrate a re-socialization process explored in Foucault's chapter on torture (39-40), his "political anatomy of the body" (193) and the training of "the technicians of discipline [who] were elaborating procedures for the individual and collective coercion of bodies" (169), bodies

which “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (136). Foucault’s thesis of the manipulation of the body to reach the soul raises interesting connotations in the *Toy Story* franchise: by staging plastic toys as opposed to living beings, *Toy Story* succeeds in dehumanizing the concept of free will.

Socialization as practiced within *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2* reflects mainstream schools of thought at best, a vision of education more consistent with correctional or penal philosophy of social control at worst; what the movies fail to feature, at least in character development, was a balance between a need for imagination and blossoming on one hand (illustrated by the graphics and action of the narrative) and the communal necessity for controlling antisocial behavior on the other (portrayed by Sid and his comeuppance). The main characters pay for their imagination with captivity.

About the Author: Paul Tremblay holds a BFA in Cinema from Concordia University (Montreal), an MA in Media Arts from Long Island University (Brooklyn) and an MLIS from McGill University (Montreal). His thesis was entitled "From Real to Hyperreal: Wartime Political Nonfiction: From the Referent to the Subversion of Signs and the Interpretive Control of Meaning" He presented on Mambéty and Dürrenmatt, published in *College and Undergraduate Libraries*, *The Journal of Religion and Film* among others. He teaches Information Literacy in Brooklyn.

Contact: paultremblay2005@gmail.com

REFERENCES

Books and Articles

Ackerman, Alan. “The Spirit of Toys: Resurrection and Redemption in *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2*.” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 74(4), 2005. 895-912. Print

Bell, Elizabeth, Lynda Haas, Laura Sells (Editors). *From Mouse to Mermaid: the Politics of Films, Gender and Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print

Booker, M. Keith. *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children’s Films*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010. Print

Byrne, Eleanor and Martin McQuillan. *Deconstructing Disney*. London: Pluto Press, 1999. Print.

Cavell, Timothy A., Shelley Humel, Kenya T. Malcolm and Amy Seay. "Socialization and Interventions for Antisocial Youth." *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*. Edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings. New York: Guilford Press, 2006. Page 42 to 67. Print

Crowther, Bruce. *Captured on Film: the Prison Movie*. London: B.T. Batsford, 1989. Print

Cuomo, Chris. "Spinsters in Sensible Shoes: Mary Poppins and Bedknobs and Broomsticks." *From Mouse to Mermaid: the Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Editors Elizabeth Bell et al. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.

Dorfman, Ariel and Armand Matterlart. *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. New York: International General, 1975. Translated from the Spanish by David Kunzle. Print

Felperin, Leslie. "Toy Story" [Review]. *Sight and Sound* 6 (3). March 1996. 51-52

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage, 1995 (© 1977). Translated by Alan Sheridan. Print.

Giroux, Henry A. "Memory and Pedagogy in the 'Wonderful World of Disney': Beyond the Politics of Innocence." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Edited by Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, Laura Sells. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.

Giroux, Henry A. *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999. Print

Gleiberman, Owen. "Plastic Fantastic." *Entertainment Weekly*. issue 302, November 24, 1995. 74. Ebsco

Klady, Leonard. "Toy Story". *Variety Movie Reviews*. November 20. 1. Ebsco.

Kline, Stephen. *Out of the Garden: Toys, TV, and Children's Culture in the Age of Marketing*. London: Verso. Print

Maslin, Janet. "There's a New Toy in the House. Uh-Oh." *The New York Times*. November 22, 1995. C9 and C12. ProQuest Historical

Mason, Paul. "Prison Decayed: Cinematic Penal Discourse and Populism 1995-2005" *Social Semiotics* 16, #4. December 2006. 607-626

O'Sullivan, Sean. "Representations of Prison in Nineties Hollywood Cinema: From *Con Air* to *The Shawshank Redemption*". *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*. 40 (4), November 2001. 317-334

Pinsky, Mark I. *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust*. Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. Print.

Reisman, David, Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

Roffman, Peter and Jim Purdy. *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair, and Politics From the Depression to the Fifties*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981. Print

Sarat, Austin. *When the State Kills: Capital Punishment and the American Condition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print

Ward, Annalee R. *Mouse Morality: the Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 2002. Print

Zipes, Jack. "Breaking the Disney Spell." *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Edited by Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, Laura Sells. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Print.

Zipes, Jack. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print

Films

Allers, Roger and Rob Minkoff, dir. (1994) *The Lion King*. Disney.

Clements, Ron and John Musker, dir. (1992) *Aladdin*. Disney.

Clements, Ron and John Musker, dir. (1989) *The Little Mermaid*. Disney.

Curtiz, Michael, dir. (1938) *Angels with Dirty Faces*. Warner Home Video

Darabont, Frank, dir. (1999) *The Green Mile*. Castle Rock Entertainment.

Darabont, Frank, dir. (1994) *The Shawshank Redemption*. Castle Rock Entertainment.

Demme, Jonathan, dir. (1999) *Beloved*, Touchstone Home Video.

Docter, Peter and Bob Peterson, dir. (2009) *Up*. Pixar/Disney.

Frankenheimer, John, dir. (1962) *Birdman of Alcatraz*. Norma Productions.

Geronimi, Clyde, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske, dir. (1950) *Cinderella*. Disney.

Fleming, Victor, Mervyn LeRoy and King Vidor, dir. (1939) *The Wizard of Oz*. MGM.

Foster, Harve and Wilfred Jackson, dir. (1946) *Song of the South*. Disney.

Glimcher, Arne, dir. (1995) *Just Cause*. Fountainbridge Film.

Hand, David, dir. (1938) *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Disney.

Hill, George W., dir. (1930) *The Big House*. Cosmopolitan Productions.

Hoblit, Gregory, dir. (1996) *Primal Fear*. Paramount Pictures

Kaye, Tony, dir. (1998) *American History X*. New Line Cinema.

Kubrick, Stanley, dir. (1971) *A Clockwork Orange*. Warner Bros.

Lasseter, John, dir. (1989) *Knick Knack*. Pixar.

Lasseter, John, dir. (1987) *Red's Dream*. Pixar.

Lasseter, John, dir. (1988) *Tin Toy*. Pixar.

Lasseter, John, dir. (1995) *Toy Story*. Pixar/Disney.

Lasseter, John and Andrew Stanton, dir. (1998) *A Bug's Life*. Pixar/Disney.

Lasseter, John, Ash Brannon and Lee Unkrich, dir. (1999) *Toy Story 2*. Pixar/Disney.

Lean, David, dir. (1957) *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Horizon Pictures.

Lee, Spike, dir. (2002) *25th Hour*. 25th Hour Production.

LeRoy, Mervin, dir. (1932) *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*. Warner Bros.

Luckey, Bud and Roger Gould, dir. (2003) *Boundin'*. Pixar.

Lurie, Rod, dir. (2001) *The Last Castle*. DreamWorks SKG.

Luske, Hamilton and Ben Sharpsteen, dir. (1940) *Pinocchio*. Disney.

Oz. Levison/Fontana/HBO [TV series], 1999-2003. Available on DVD [Various directors]

Polanski, Roman, dir. (2002) *The Pianist*. R.P. Productions.

Pontecorvò, Gillo, dir. (1959) *Kapò*. Cineriz.

Parker, Alan, dir. (1978) *Midnight Express*. Casablanca Filmworks.

Prison Break. Original Television [TV series], 2005-2009. Available on DVD [Various directors]

Robbins, Tim, dir. (1995) *Dead Man Walking*. Havoc.

Rosenberg, Stuart, dir. (1967) *Cool Hand Luke*. Jalem Productions.

Schaffner, Franklin J, dir. (1973) *Papillon*. Allied Artists Pictures

Siegel, Don, dir. (1979) *Escape from Alcatraz*. Paramount Pictures.

Sharpsteen, Ben, dir. (1941) *Dumbo*. Disney.

Spielberg, Steven, dir. (1993) *Schindler's List*. Universal Pictures.

Stanton, Andrew and Lee Unkrich, dir. (2003) *Finding Nemo*. Pixar.

Sturges, John, dir. (1963) *The Great Escape*. Mirisch Corporation.

Trousdale, Garry and Kirk Wise, dir. (1991) *Beauty and the Beast*. Disney.

Unkrich, Lee, dir. (2010) *Toy Story 3*. Pixar.

West, Simon, dir. (1997) *Con Air*. Touchstone.

Wilder, Billy, dir. (1953) *Stalag 17*. Paramount.

Wrede, Caspar, dir. (1970) *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Group W Films LLC.